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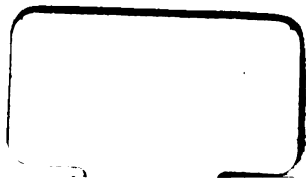
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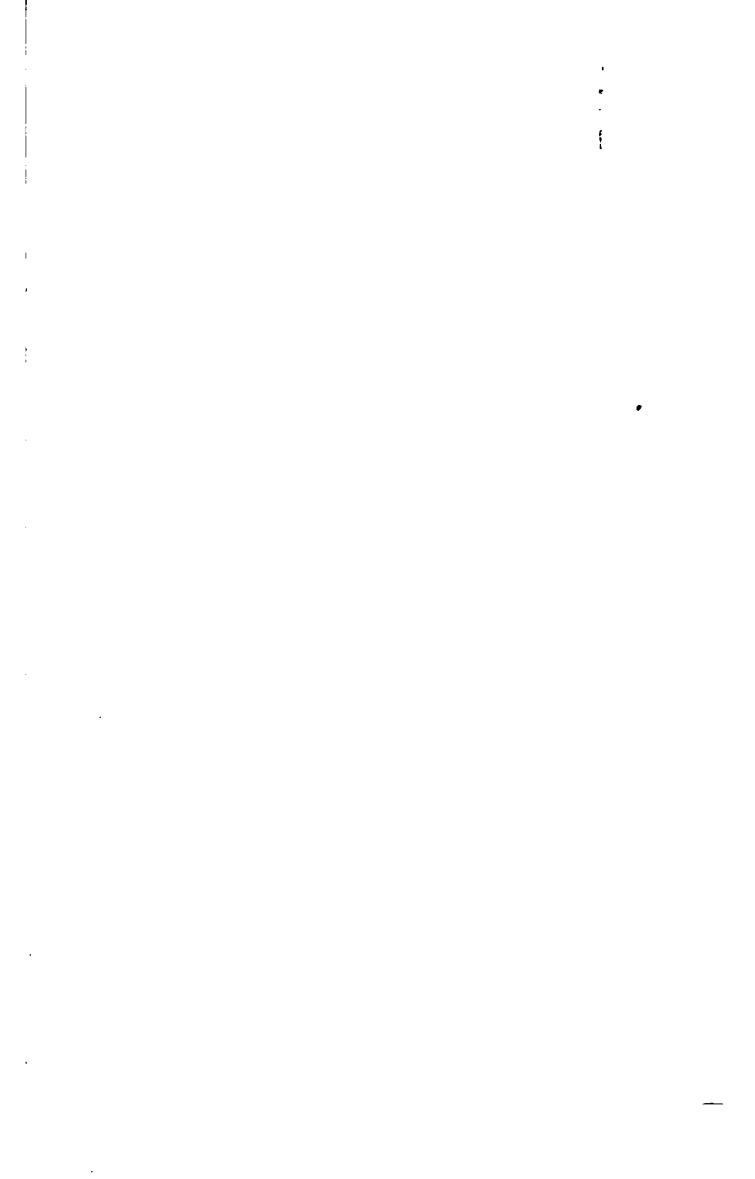


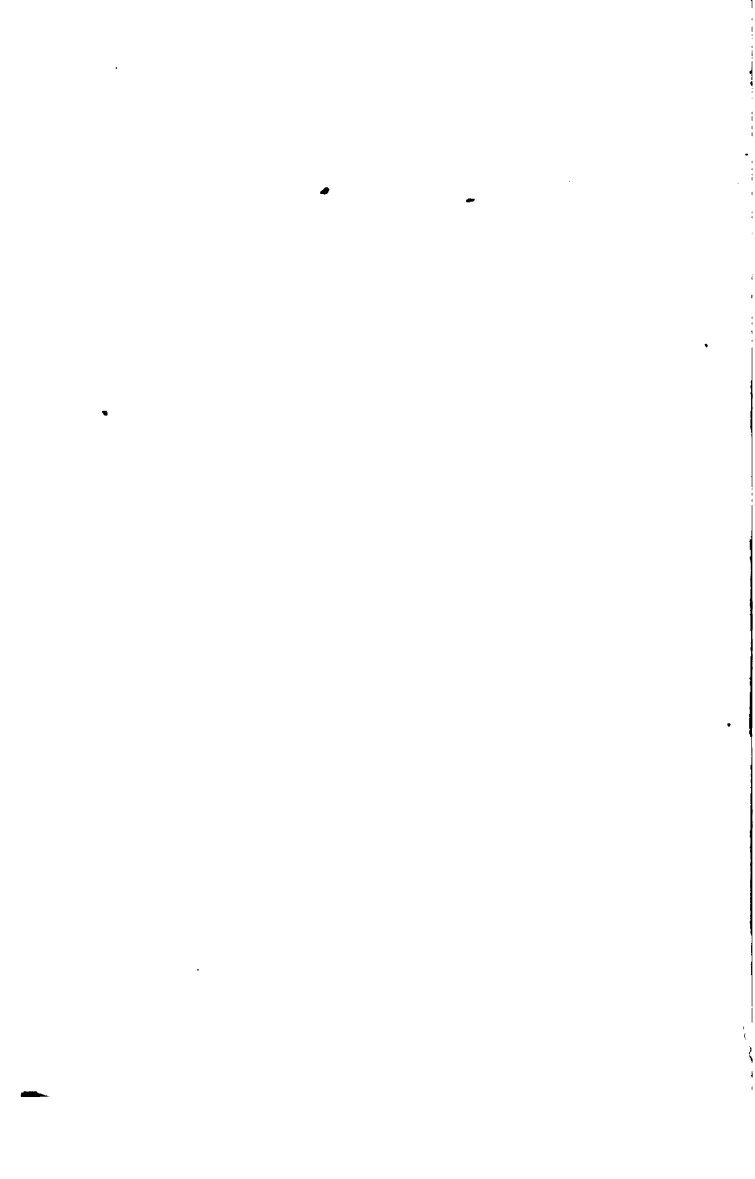
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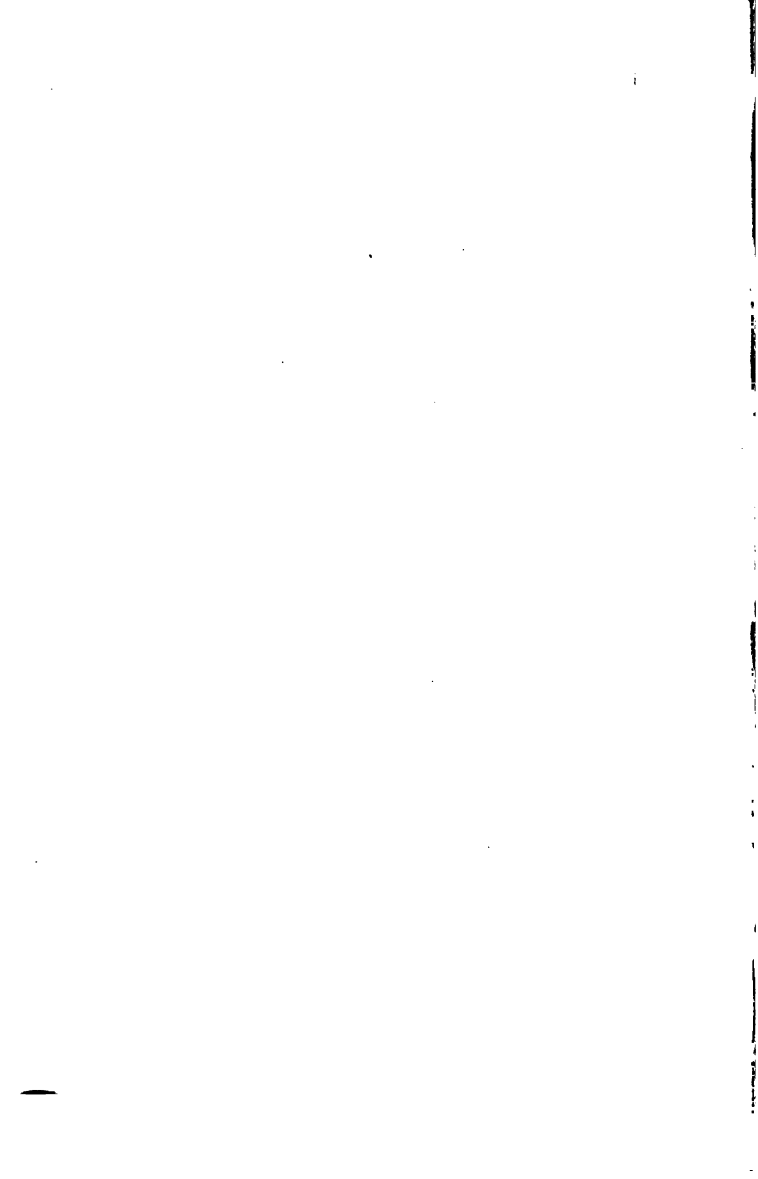
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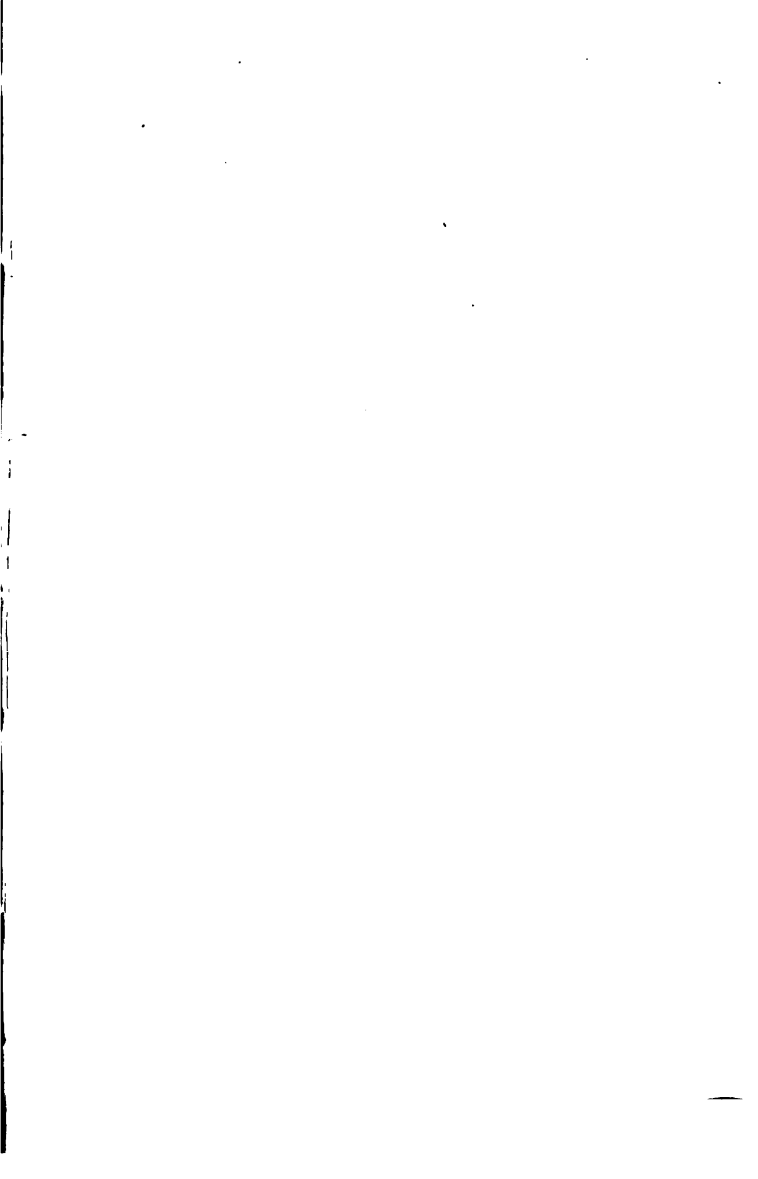






LET US FOLLOW HIM.







"He rested His gaze on her pale suffering face."—Page 67.

° Let Us Follow Him

BY

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

TRANSLATED BY

VATSLAF A. HLASKO AND THOS. H. BULLICK



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Let Us Follow Him

LET US FOLLOW HIM.

CHAPTER I.

CAIUS SEPTIMUS CINNA was a Roman patrician. His youth was spent in the hard life of the camp. Later he returned to Rome to enjoy his honors and to spend, in luxurious living, his large but rapidly diminishing fortune. He enjoyed to his full bent all that the great city could give him. His nights were spent at feasts in magnificent suburban villas; his days were passed in polemical controversies with the lanists, in discussions with the rhetors at the trepidaria, where they had debates interspersed with gossip of the city and the world; at the circuses, at the races, at the fights of the gladiators, with the Thracian fortune-tellers, and with the wonderful

dancing girls brought from the islands of the archipelago.

Being a relative, on his mother's side, of the famous Lucullus, he inherited the tastes of an epicure. At his table were served Greek wines, oysters from Neapolis, locusts from Numidia, preserved in honey from Pontus, and all that Rome possessed he obtained, beginning with the fishes from the Red Sea, to the white birds from the banks of the Boristenes. He used the good things of this world not only as a soldier who boisterously feasts, but also as a patrician who daintily selects. He persuaded himself to, or perhaps awakened within himself an admiration for beautiful things; for statues excavated from the ruins of Corinth, for the epilychnia from Attica, for Etruscan vases or those brought from the misty Sericum, for Roman mosaics, for textile fabrics from the vicinity of the Euphrates, for

Arabian incense, and for all those small objects which go to fill up the emptiness of patrician life. He knew how to speak of them as a connoisseur with the older patricians who ornamented their bald heads with garlands of roses, and who chewed heliotrope after their feasts. He felt equally the beauty of the periods of Cicero, of the verses of Horace or Ovid. Being educated by an Athenian rhetor, he spoke Greek fluently, memorized whole chapters of the Iliad, and during the feasts would sing the songs of Anacreon until he was either drunk or hoarse. Through his master and the rhetors he became familiar with the philosophies to such an extent that he understood the architecture of the different mental structures reared in Hellas and the Colonies; he further understood that they were lying in ruins. He knew personally a great many stoics who were not congenial to

him because he regarded them rather as a political party, and also as tetricks who are opposed to the joys of life. The skeptics were often seated at his table, where between courses they upset whole systems of philosophy, proclaiming, by the craters filled with wine, that the delights of life were vanity, that truth was something unattainable, that absolute quietude was the true aim of all sages.

He heard all this, but it made no deep impression on him. He did not profess any particular principles, and did not care to do so. He looked upon life as upon the sea, where the wind blew as it pleased, and wisdom to him was the art of trimming his sails. Besides, he valued the broad shoulders which he possessed, his healthy stomach, his handsome Roman head, with its strong profile and mighty jaws; with these he felt sure he could pass safely through the world.

Although not belonging to the school of the skeptics he practically was a skeptic, and also a hedonist, though he knew that luxury was not happiness. Being ignorant of the true teachings of Epicurus he regarded himself as an epicurean. Generally he looked upon this philosophy as a kind of mental gymnastics as good as that taught by the lanists. When he was tired of debates he went to the circus to see blood flow at the gladiatorial contests.

In the gods he did not believe, nor in virtue, truth or happiness. He believed only in auguries; he had his superstitions, and the mysterious faiths of the orient aroused his curiosity. He was of the opinion that life was a great amphora, the better the quality of the wine it contained the richer it looked, so he was trying to fill his amphora with the richest wine. He loved no one, but he liked many things, and amongst them his mag-

nificent head and his handsome patrician foot.

In the first years of his elegantly riotous leisure he was ambitious to astonish all Rome, and he succeeded in this several times. Later he became indifferent to such conquests.

CHAPTER II.

IN the end, by his manner of living he ruined himself. His property was seized by his creditors and in its place was left to Cinna a sense of great weariness, as if exhausted after hard labor, satiety, and one more very unexpected thing, namely, a feeling of deep unrest. Had he not enjoyed riches, love, as it was understood by his surrounding world, luxury, the glory of war and military honors, dangers? Had he not obtained a knowledge, more or less, of the Circle of human thought;

had he not come in contact with poetry and art? Now he thought that he had gleaned from life all that it had to give. Yet he had the feeling that something had eluded him and that something of most importance. He knew not what it was, and vainly he questioned himself and tried to solve the enigma. Often he tried to free himself from these obtruding thoughts which increased his restlessness; he tried to convince himself that life contained nothing more than that which he had tasted, but his restlessness instead of decreasing grew to such an extent that it seemed to him that he was not only disturbed on his own behalf, but also on behalf of all Rome. He envied the skeptics, at the same time condemning them for their opinion that the yearnings of life could be satisfied with vacuity. In him were two personalities: one of which

seemed to be astonished at his restlessness and the other recognized its justness.

Shortly after the loss of his property, through the powerful influence of his family, Cinna was appointed to a government post at Alexandria, in order that in this rich country he might regain his fortune. His restlessness embarked with him on a ship at Brundisium and was his associate during the sea voyage. In Alexandria Cinna thought that his governmental occupation, meeting with new people, another world, fresh impressions, would free him from this importunate associate, but he was mistaken. One month passed—two—then as the grain of Demetra brought from Italy waxed stronger in the rich soil of the Delta, so this restlessness from a small bush grew into a mighty cedar tree, and threw dark and darker shadows on Cinna's soul.

At the beginning Cinna tried to sup-

press this feeling by indulging in the same kind of life that he had led in Rome. Alexandria was a luxurious city, full of Greek maidens with golden hair and light complexions, which the Egyptian suns coated with amber-colored transparent hues. In their embraces he sought surcease.

Even this satiated him, and he began to contemplate suicide. By this means many of his friends had escaped the troubles of life, and at much less provocation than Cinna's—often from ennui, emptiness, or for absence of desire for further enjoyments. A slave, holding in his hand a sword, strongly and dexterously, in one moment would finish all. Cinna was haunted by these thoughts, and when he had nearly decided to follow their beckoning, a wonderful dream he had restrained him. It seemed to him that he was crossing a river and there on the opposite bank

was his restlessness awaiting him, in the form of an emaciated old slave, who bowed low before him and said, "I came before you so that I might meet you." For the first time in his life Cinna was sore afraid, because he understood that inasmuch as he could not think of a future life without this restlessness they would be there together. As a last resort he decided to approach the philosophers who swarmed in the Serapeum, thinking that perhaps with them he would find a solution of the problem. Truly they were unable to answer him, and they titled him "*ton mou-seiou*," which title they often gave to Romans of high birth and station. At this time it was very little consolation to him; the stamp of wisdom given to one who was unable to answer a most vital question seemed to Cinna ironical. Yet he thought the Serapeum might unveil its wisdom

gradually, and he did not entirely lose hope.

Most active among the philosophers in Alexandria was noble Timon the Athenian, a man of great wealth and a Roman citizen. He had lived over a decade in Alexandria, where he came to study the mysterious Egyptian sciences. It was said of him that there was not a manuscript or papyrus in the Biblioteka which he had not read, and that he was possessed of all human wisdom. He was a man of pleasant and reasonable temperament. Out of a multitude of pedants and small commentators Cinna at once recognized his worth and associated with him, which relation after a time ripened into a near intimacy and even friendship. The young Roman admired his skill in dialectics, the eloquence and logic with which the old man spoke of the sublime things pertaining to the destiny of mankind and the

world. It appeared to him as if his logic were combined with a certain melancholy. Later, when their relations had become closer, Cinna often desired to inquire of the old man the cause of this melancholy and at the same time to open his heart to him. Somehow in the end he came to it.

One evening, after a heated discussion on the question of the transmigration of souls, they remained alone on a terrace overlooking the sea, and Cinna, taking Timon by the hand, openly confessed to him the great torture of his life and the cause that led him to seek near relations with the scientists and philosophers of the Serapeum: "At last I have gained this much," he said in the end; "I have got to know thee, Timon, and now I am sure if thou canst not solve the problem of my life, no one else can." Timon, who had been watching the reflection of the new

moon on the smooth surface of the sea, said :

“Dost thou see, oh, Cinna, the flocks of birds which come from the dreary north, dost thou know what they seek in Egypt?”

“I know they seek warmth and light.”

“The human soul also seeks warmth, which is love, and light, which is truth. But the birds know where to fly for their good; human souls fly in the desert, are astray, restless, and melancholy.”

“Noble Timon, why can they not find the way?”

“Formerly people found peace and rest in the gods, but now faith in the gods is burned out like the oil in the lamp. Later they thought that philosophy would be the sun of truth for human souls—to-day, as you know best yourself, on its ruins in Rome, in the academy at Athens, and here, sit the skeptics, and it seems to

them that they have brought peace, but they have brought only unrest. For to renounce the warmth and light is to leave the soul in darkness, which is restlessness. So with outstretched hands we gropingly seek the exit."

"Have you found it yourself?"

"I sought and did not find it. Thou soughtest it in luxury, I in meditation, and both of us are surrounded with darkness. Know, therefore, that not only thou sufferest, but that in thee suffers the soul of the whole world. No doubt, long ago thou didst cease to believe in the gods."

"In Rome they worship the gods still publicly, and even get new ones from Asia and Egypt, but perhaps only the vegetable venders, who in the morning come from the country to the city, believe sincerely in them."

"And they alone are peaceful."

“Just as they who here bow to cats and onions.”

“Just as the animals who after gorging themselves desire sleep.”

“In such a case is life worth living?”

“Do you know where death will bring us?”

“So what is the difference between the skeptics and you?”

“Skeptics accept the darkness or they pretend to accept, while I am tortured in it.”

“And you see no salvation?”

Timon remained silent for a time, then answered slowly and with a certain hesitation. “I wait for it.”

“Where from?”

“I do not know.”

He leaned his head upon his hand, and as influenced by the silence that reigned upon the terrace, he began to speak in a low, gentle voice:

24 Let Us Follow Him.

“It is a wonderful thing and it seems to me sometimes that if the world had contained nothing more than that which we now know, and if we could be nothing more than that which we now are, restlessness would not be in us. Thus in sickness we have the hope of health. The faith in Olympus and philosophy is dead, but the health is perhaps some new truth which I know not.

.

Contrary to his expectation, to Cinna this conversation brought great relief. Learning that not only he, but the whole world, was weighed down with sin and sorrow, he experienced the feeling as if a heavy load was taken from his shoulders and shared by thousands of others.

CHAPTER III.

SINCE then the friendship between Cinna and the old Greek became closer. They visited each other more frequently and shared their thoughts as bread is divided at a feast. Although Cinna felt that sense of weariness which always follows enjoyment, still he was too young a man for life to lose all its attractions, and such an attraction he found in Anthea, the only daughter of Timon.

Her fame in Alexandria was not less than that of her father. She was adored by honorable Romans, who visited the house of Timon. She was adored by the Greeks, she was adored by the philosophers of the Serapeum, and she was adored by the people. Timon did not shut her up in the gynaceum as other women were confined, and he carefully instructed her in all his knowledge.

When she had passed her childhood he read with her Greek books, and even Roman and Hebrew; being gifted with an extraordinary memory, and reared in polyglot Alexandria, she had learned to speak these languages fluently. She was his companion in his thoughts, often took part in discussions, which in the time of the Symposiums took place in the house of Timon, often in the labyrinth of difficult problems, she never lost herself, and like Ariadne, she safely led out others. Her father regarded her with great admiration and honor. Besides, she was surrounded by a mysterious enchantment verging on holiness, for the reason that she had prophetic dreams and visions in which she saw things invisible to the eyes of mortals. The old sage loved her as his own soul, and for that reason he was afraid to lose her, because she often said that in her dreams appeared some malig-

nant spirits and a wondrous light. She knew not whether it were the fountain of life or death.

Meanwhile she was surrounded by love. Egyptians who visited the house of Timon called her Lotus, because that flower was worshipped on the banks of the Nile, or perhaps because he who saw her once might forget the whole world.

Her beauty was equal to her wisdom. Egyptian suns had not bronzed her face, in which the rosy rays of dawn seemed to be inclosed in the transparency of a pearly shell; her eyes were as blue as the Nile, and her glances seemed to come from distances as unknown as do the waters of this mysterious river. When Cinna saw and heard her the first time, on returning to his home, he felt inclined to rear an altar to her honor in the atrium of his house, and sacrifice on it white doves. He had met in his life thousands

of women, beginning from the maidens of the far north, with white eyelashes and hair of the color of ripened corn, to Numidians, black as lava, but until now he had never met such a form, nor such a soul. The more he saw of her, the better he knew her; the more he heard her speak, the greater grew his astonished admiration. Sometimes he who did not believe in the gods thought that Anthea could not be the daughter of Timon, but of some god, and that she was half a woman and half an immortal.

Soon Cinna found that he loved her with a great and unconquerable love, as different from any feeling awakened before as Anthea was different from all other women. He wanted to possess her only to worship her. For this he was ready to give his life. He felt that he would rather be a pauper with her than Cæsar without her. And as the vortex of

an ocean whirlpool engulfs with its irresistible power all that approaches its circle, so Cinna's love absorbed his soul, heart, thoughts; his days, nights, and all that composed his life.

At last this great love engulfed Anthea.

"*Tu felix, Cinna,*" said his friends to him. "*Tu felix, Cinna,*" he repeated to himself. And when at last he wedded her, and her divine lips had uttered the sacramental words: "Where thou art, Caius, there am I, Caia," then it seemed to him that his happiness would be as an inexhaustible and limitless sea.



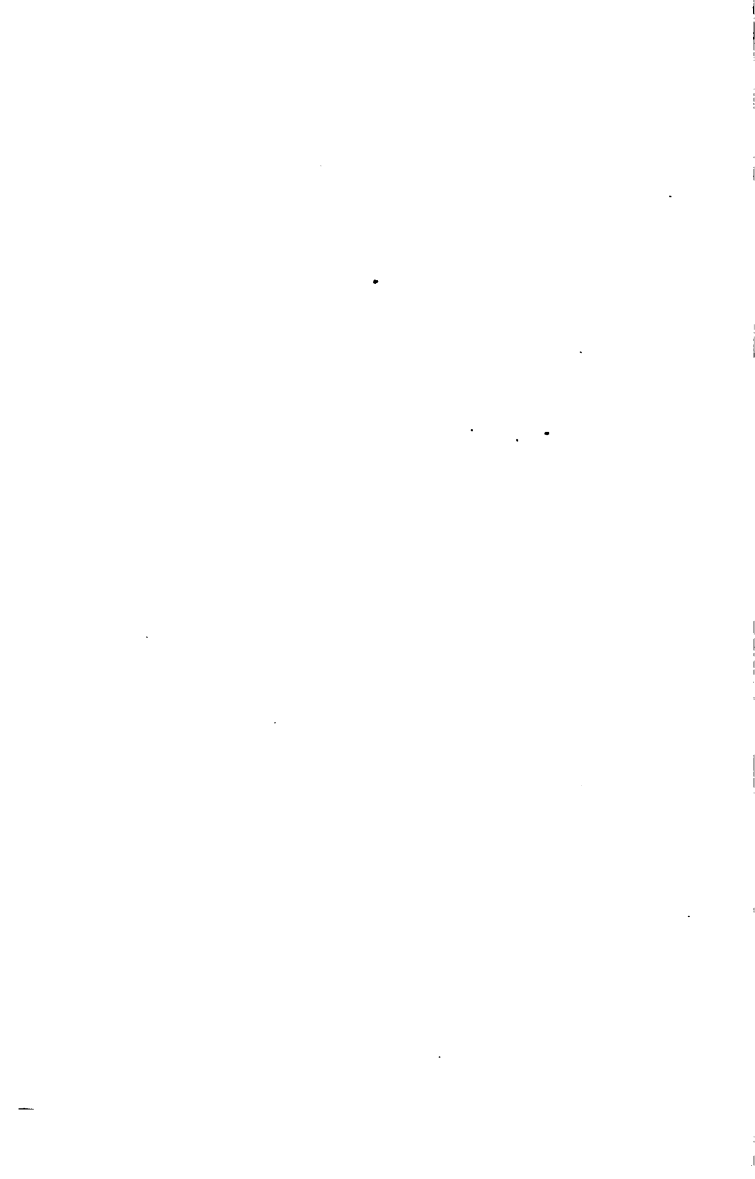
CHAPTER IV.

A YEAR passed and the young wife continued to receive honor and homage as it accorded to one divine. She was to her husband as the apple of his eye, love,

wisdom, light. But Cinna comparing his happiness to the sea forgot that the sea ebbs and flows. After a year Anthea was afflicted with a cruel and unknown disease. Her dreams changed into terrible visions which exhausted her life. In her face died out the light of dawn and there only remained the transparency of the pearly shells: her hands became translucent, her eyes sank away, and the rosy lotus became as white as a marble statue. It was observed that the buzzards hovered over Cinna's house, which was considered an omen of death in Egypt. Her terrifying visions increased. When in the mid-day hours the sun flooded the world with its brilliant whiteness and the city was submerged in silence, it appeared to Anthea that she heard around herself the quick steps of some invisible beings, and that in the depths of the air she saw a dry, yellow, corpse-like face, looking on her



"Save me, Caius! Defend me!"—Page 31.



with its black eyes. Those eyes looked into hers piercingly, as if calling her to follow it somewhere into gloomy darkness, full of mystery and terror. Then Anthea's body began to tremble, as if in a fever, her forehead was covered with pallor and drops of cold sweat, and this worshipped priestess of the fireside was changing into a defenseless and frightened child, who, hiding herself on the breast of her husband, repeated with whitened lips, "Save me, Caius ! defend me !"

Caius was ready to fight every specter from the subterranean caves of Proserpine, but vainly his eyes searched space. As usual at the noon hour the place was deserted. The white light flooded the city; the sea seemed to burn in the sun, and in the silence was only heard the cry of the buzzards, circling over the house.

The visions became more frequent, then they occurred daily. They persecuted

Anthea no less outside of the house than they did in the atrium and living rooms. Cinna, by the advice of physicians, brought Egyptian Sambucins and Bedouins to play on porcelain flutes, so that their noisy music might drown the voices of the invisible beings. But this was of no avail. Anthea heard these voices in the midst of the greatest noise, and when the sun was so high in the heavens that shadows lay around the feet as a robe dropped from the shoulders, there in the heated, trembling air appeared the corpse-like face gazing on Anthea with its beady eyes receding slowly, as if saying "follow me."

Sometimes it seemed to Anthea as if the lips of the corpse moved slowly. Sometimes it seemed that there issued from them black, repulsive beetles, which flew to her through the air. The very memory of this vision filled her eyes with terror,

and in the end her life became so frightful a torture that she implored Cinna to hold his sword so that she might kill herself, or that he would let her partake of poison.

This he knew he could not do. He was willing with his sword to let out his own life's blood, but kill her he could not. When he imagined her dead face, with closed eyelids, pale with the cold quietude of death and her breast torn with his sword, he felt that to do so he must first become mad.

A certain Greek physician said to him that it was Hecate who appeared to Anthea, and that those invisible beings whose rustlings terrified the patient belonged to the band of that baneful divinity. According to him there was no help for Anthea, since all those who saw Hecate must die.

Then Cinna, who not long ago would have sneered at a belief in Hecate, offered

34 Let Us Follow Him.

to this goddess sacrifices of a hecatomb. But the offering availed not, and the next day the spectral eyes gazed at Anthea.

They tried to veil her head, but she saw the corpse-like face even through the thickest covering. When she was confined in a darkened room the face looked upon her from the walls, dispelling the darkness with a pale, ghost-like phosphorescence. In the evening-tide the patient felt better. Then she lapsed into such a profound sleep that it seemed to both Cinna and Timon that she would never awaken again. Soon she got so weak that she could not walk unassisted. They carried her in a litter.

The old restlessness of Cinna returned again with a hundred-fold force, and completely took possession of him. There was in him a great fear for Anthea's life, and a strange feeling that somehow, in some way, her sickness had a mysterious

relation to those unsolvable problems which he had discussed with Timon in their first serious conversation. It may have been that the old sage thought likewise, but Cinna did not wish and was afraid to question him about it. Meanwhile the patient was fading like a flower in whose cup nestles the poisonous spider.

Cinna, battling with despair, yet tried all means to save her. First, he carried her to the plains in the vicinity of Memphis, but when the deep silence of the pyramids did not relieve her, he returned to Alexandria and surrounded her with fortune-tellers and magicians, soothsayers and a motley crowd of pretenders, who duped credulous people with their so-called miraculous medicine. He had no choice and grasped every means in sight.

At this time there arrived in Alexandria from Cæsarea a famous Jewish physician by the name of Joseph, son of Khuza.

Cinna brought him at once to his wife, and for a moment hope returned to his heart. Joseph, who did not believe in the Greek and Roman gods, discarded with derision every thought of Hecate. He contended that it was demons that possessed the patient and advised them to leave Egypt, where, beside demons, the miasma of the swampy Delta impaired her health. He advised also, perhaps for the reason that he was a Jew, that they should go to Jerusalem as a city to which demons have no access, and where the air is dry and healthy.

Cinna still more willingly followed this advice, first, because he had no other advice to follow, and secondly, that over Jerusalem ruled a Procurator who was known to him, and whose ancestors in the olden times had been clients of the house of Cinna.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Pro-

curator Pontius Pilate received them with great hospitality, presented them his summer villa, near the walls of the city, in which to reside. Even before his arrival the hope of Cinna was shattered. The corpse-like face looked on Anthea even on the deck of the ship, and after their arrival at their destination the patient awaited the noon hour with the same deadly fear as previously in Alexandria.

Thus their days were passed with feelings of oppression, fear, despair, and expectation of death.

CHAPTER V.

IN the atrium, despite the fountain near by, the shady portico and the early hour, it was intensely hot; the marble radiated the heat of the vernal sun, and close by the house grew an old and large pistachio tree, which threw its shade over a great

space. The breeze played in the open space, and Cinna commanded a chair, decked with hyacinths and apple blossoms, to be placed under the tree for Anthea. Then seating himself by her side he placed his palm on her white and wasted hand, and said:

“Is it good for thee here, Carissima?”

“It is good,” answered she in a faint voice.

She closed her eyes as if sleeping gently. Silence ensued: the breeze sighed through the branches of the pistachio tree and on the ground around the chair played golden circlets of light falling through the leaves, and the locusts chirped in the crevices of the stones.

Shortly the patient opened her eyes. “Caius,” she said, “is it true that in this land appeared a philosopher who healed the sick?”

“Here they call this one a prophet,”

answered Cinna. "I have heard of him and intended to call him to thee, but it appears that he was a false miracle-worker. Besides he blasphemed against the temple and the law of the land, therefore Pilate gave him up to death, and to-day he will be crucified."

Anthea bowed her head.

"Time will heal thee," said Cinna, seeing her sorrow, which was reflected on his face.

"Time is in the service of death, not life," answered she slowly.

Again silence ensued; around her constantly played the golden circlets; the locusts chirped still louder, and from the crevices of the rocks glided small lizards and chameleons seeking sunny spots.

Cinna's glance rested tenderly on Anthea and for the thousandth time despairing thoughts passed through his mind, that all means of help were exhausted,

that not a spark of hope remained, and that soon this loved form would become only a fleeting shadow and a handful of dust inurned in a columbarium.

Reclining there in the blossom-bedecked chair she looked as if death had called her his own.

“I will follow thee, too,” thought Cinna.

Suddenly was heard the sound of approaching footsteps. Anthea’s face became at once deadly white, her half-parted lips breathed convulsively, her breast heaved quickly—the unhappy martyr felt that it was the band of her invisible tormentors which always heralded the appearance of the hideous corpse with the horrible glaring eyes. But Cinna, taking her hand, reassured her, saying:

“Anthea, fear not. I also hear the footsteps.”

Shortly he added:

“This is Pontius, coming to visit us.”

And truly there appeared in a bend of the path the Procurator, accompanied by two slaves. He was not a young man. He had a round, carefully shaven face, which showed an assumption of authority commingled with an air of weariness.

“I salute thee, noble Cinna, and thee, divine Anthea!” said he, entering under the shade of the pistachio. “After the cool night the day is now warm. Oh, that it would be fortunate to you both that the health of Anthea would blossom as the hyacinths and apple buds that adorn her chair.”

“Peace to thee, and welcome,” answered Cinna.

The Procurator, seating himself upon a fragment of rock, looked at Anthea anxiously and said:

“Loneliness gives birth to melancholy and sickness, and in the midst of crowds one cannot be afraid, so I will give thee

counsel. To our misfortune this is neither Antioch nor Cæsarea, there are no gladiatorial contests or races, and if a circus should appear these fanatics would tear it to pieces the second day. Here you hear only the one word, 'law,' and this 'law' opposes everything. I would rather be in Scythia than here."

"What speaketh thou about, Pilate?"

"True it is, I wandered away from the subject. But my troubles are the cause of it. I said that in the midst of crowds there was no place for fear. To-day you have a chance of witnessing a sight. In Jerusalem we should be satisfied with that which we can get, and above all it is necessary that at noon-time Anthea should be amidst the crowd. To-day will die on the cross three men. It is better to see this than nothing. Besides, on account of the Passover, there has gathered in the city a strange, grotesque crowd of religious fa-

natics from all over the country; you can observe them. I will order a good position reserved for you near the crosses. I hope the condemned men will die bravely. One of them is a strange Character : he says he is the Son of God. He is sweet as a dove, and truly has done nothing for which he could deserve death."

"And thou condemnedst him to the cross?"

"I wished to drop trouble from my hands, and at the same time not to arouse the nest of hornets that swarmed around the temple. They are sending complaints to Rome about me anyway. Besides, why bother about one who is not a Roman citizen?"

"He will not suffer the less on that account."

The Procurator did not answer and shortly began to speak, as if to himself:

"There is one thing I do not like; that is,

44 Let Us Follow Him.

extremism. When this is proclaimed to me it robs me of my pleasure for the whole day. The golden mean, according to my opinion, is what common-sense commands us to observe. There is no place in the world where this principle is more neglected than here. Oh, how all this tortures me! Oh, how it tortures me! There is no quietness, no equilibrium, either in man or nature; for instance, now it is spring, the nights are cold, and in the daytime it is so hot that one cannot walk on the stones. Noon is far off—look how it is! And as for people—let us not speak of them! I am here since I cannot help it—why speak of it? I would again wander from the subject. Go and see the crucifixion. I am sure that this Nazarene will die bravely. I ordered him scourged, thinking by this to save him from death. I am not a cruel man. When he was scourged he was as patient as a lamb and blessed the people,

When his blood was dripping he lifted his eyes upward and prayed. He is the most wonderful man I have seen in my life. On his account my wife did not give me any peace or one moment's rest. 'Do not let the innocent die,' from the early dawn she constantly said. I wished to save him. Twice I climbed the Bima and addressed the fanatical priests and this unclean crowd. They clamored with one voice, throwing back their heads and opening wide their mouths, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'"

"And thou didst yield?" said Cinna.

"Because in the city would have occurred turbulent riots, and I am placed here to preserve the peace. I must do my duty. I do not like excesses, and besides I am very tired; but when I once decide to do something I do not hesitate to sacrifice, for the general good, the life of one man, especially if he is an unknown

man about whom none will inquire. It is bad for him that he is not a Roman citizen."

"The sun shines not over Rome alone," whispered Anthea.

"Divine Anthea," replied the Procurator, "I would answer thee that over this whole earth the sun shines on the Roman Empire, and for its good it behooves us to sacrifice all, and riots undermine our dignity. But before all I pray thee, do not ask from me that I change my decree. Cinna will tell thee also that it cannot be, and when a decree is once promulgated Cæsar alone could change it. Even if I desired I could not. Is not that the truth, Caius?"

"It is so."

To Anthea these words caused a visible agitation, and she said, thinking perhaps of herself :

"So, then, it is possible to suffer and die without guilt."

"No one is without guilt," answered Pontius. "This Nazarene did not commit any crime, therefore as Procurator I washed my hands. But as a man I condemned his doctrine. For a purpose, I conversed with him freely, desiring to examine him, and I was convinced he proclaimed unheard-of things. It is difficult! The world must rest on cool reason. Who denies that virtue is needed? Certainly not I. But only the stoics teach us to bear adversity with serenity, and they do not require us to renounce everything from our estates to our dinner. Cinna, thou art a reasonable man, what wouldst thou think of me if I should give this house in which thou livest to the ragged beggars who sun themselves at the city gates? And this is what he requires. Again he says that we should love all peo-

ple equally: Jews the same as Romans, Romans as Egyptians, Egyptians as Africans. I confess I have had enough of it. At the critical time when I spoke with him he did not seem concerned about his life, but he behaved as if the question concerned some one else; he was preaching and praying. I am not called upon to save a man who cares little to save himself. Then, he calls himself the Son of God, and destroys the foundation upon which the world rests, and therefore harms men. Let him think what he pleases in his own mind, but not destroy. As a man I protest against his doctrine. If I do not believe, for instance, in the gods, 'tis my affair. Yet, I acknowledge the need of religion, and announce it publicly, since I recognize that religion for the people is a bridle. The horses must be securely fastened. Besides, to this Naza-

rene death should have no terrors, for he affirms that he will rise from the dead."

Cinna and Anthea looked at each other with astonishment.

"That he will arise from the dead?"

"No more, no less: after three days. So at least announce his disciples. I forgot to ask him. That is of little consequence, as death frees us from all promises. Even if he does not arise from the dead he will lose nothing, for according to his teachings true happiness, together with life eternal, begins only after death. He really speaks of it as one who is certain. His hades is more bright than our sunny world, and the more one suffers here the more surely he will enter there; he must only love, love, and love."

"A wonderful doctrine," said Anthea.

"And they clamored to thee, 'Crucify him?'" queried Cinna.

"I even do not wonder hatred is the soul of these people. What then, if not hatred, would clamor for the cross, for love?"

Anthea placed her wasted hand upon her forehead.

"And is he sure that we will live and be happy—after death?"

"On this account neither the cross nor death affrights him."

"How good that would be, Cinna."

Shortly she asked again:

"How does he know all this?"

The Procurator, making a dissenting gesture with his hand, answered:

"He says that he knows it from the Father of all men, which is for the Jews the same as Jupiter is to us, with this difference, according to the Nazarene, that he is One alone and all merciful."

"How good that would be, Caius," repeated the patient.

Cinna opened his lips as if he would speak, but remained silent, and the conversation ceased.

Pontius evidently meditated further on the strange teachings of the Nazarene, for he shook his head negatively, and at intervals shrugged his shoulders. At last he rose and began saying farewell.

Suddenly Anthea said:

“Cains, let us go hence and see this Nazarene.”

“Hasten,” said the departing Pilate, “soon the procession will start.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE day, which in the morning had been hot and clear, became overcast at noon. From the northeast came dark and coppery clouds, not very large, but ominous and pregnant with storm. Between them could yet be seen frag-

ments of the blue sky, but it could be easily foreseen that they would soon all come together and veil the horizon. Meanwhile the sun tinged the side of the clouds with gold and fire. Over the city itself, and adjoining hills, was still outstretched an expanse of blue sky, and beneath the wind was still.

On a high plateau, called Golgotha, stood, here and there, small crowds of people who had come in advance of the procession. The sun shone on the wide, rocky spaces, desolate, barren, and melancholy. Their gray, monotonous color was interrupted here and there with a black net of crags and fissures, which seemed more black in contrast with the brightness of the plateau, which was flooded with sunshine. Far away were seen higher hills, equally desolate, veiled in the blue mist of the distance.

Lower, between the walls of the city

and the plateau of Golgotha, lay a plain, broken in places with terraces of rock, but less barren. From out the fissures of the rocks in which rich loam had collected grew fig trees, with leaves scarce and poor. Occasionally arose buildings fastened like swallows' nests to the rocks, or white painted graves glistening in the sunlight. The influx of people from the country for the holy days caused them to rear close to the walls of the city multitudes of huts and tents, thus creating many camps, full of men and camels.

The sun rose higher and higher in the clear part of the sky. The hour was approaching when deep silence reigned on these hills, and all nature sought the shade. And even now, in great contrast to the living crowds, sorrow seemed to brood over this place where the blinding light fell not on the green turf, but on the masses of gray desolate rock. The

murmur of far distant voices coming from the walls, changed as if into the ripple of the waves, and seemed to be absorbed in the silence.

The scattered groups of people, who from the early morn had awaited on Golgotha, now turned their faces toward the city, from whence they expected the procession to start every moment.

Anthea now arrived, carried in a litter, escorted by soldiers who were sent by the Procurator, to clear the way and protect her against the fanatical crowds who hated all foreigners. Near to the litter walked Cinna, in the company of the centurion Rufilus.

Anthea was more quiet and less terrified at the approach of the noon time, threatening her with those frightful visions which sapped her life. The memory of what the Procurator had said to her of the young Nazarene absorbed her

thoughts and turned her attention away from her own misery. It all seemed to her wonderful, and she could not understand. In her world many men died as quietly as dies the funeral pyre when the fuel is done. But their peace arose from courage, or a philosophical indifference to the unheeding fates; their light seemed changing into darkness; true life into some misty, fantastic and indescribable existence. Until now, no one blesses death, no one dies with the absolute surety that after the pyre or grave begins a true existence and happiness so mighty and infinite, such as only a being all-powerful and omnipotent can give.

He, then, who hath to be crucified announced this as undoubted truth. This doctrine not only impressed Anthea, but seemed to her the only fountain of hope and consolation. She knew that he must die, and a great sympathy filled her soul.

What was death to her? It was abandonment of Cinna, abandonment of her father, abandonment of the world and love; emptiness, coldness, nothingness, gloom.

Sweet was life to her, bitter was her regret to leave it. If death could be of some avail, or if it could be possible to take with one even the memory of love, she would more easily be resigned to the inevitable.

Expecting from death nothing, now she suddenly learns that it can give her all.

And who announces this? Some wonderful man—a teacher, a philosopher, a prophet—who commended love as the highest virtue, who, while suffering agonies under the lash, blessed his persecutors, who intended to crucify him. So Anthea thought, “Why did he teach so, if the cross is his only reward? Others desired power—he cared naught for it;

others desired property—he remained poor; others desired palaces, feasts, luxuries, purple robes, chariots inlaid with mother-of-pearl and ivory—he lived as a shepherd. Again he commended love, pity, poverty, so he could not be bad, or purposely mislead others. If that which he spoke is truth, then death be blessed as an end of earthly misery, as a change from small to large and better happiness, as a light to fading eyes, and as wings with which to fly into eternal joy!” Now Anthea understood what meant the assurance of the resurrection.

The mind and heart of the poor sufferer clung with all her force to this doctrine. She recalled the words of her father, who often said, that only some new truth can free the tortured human soul from its darkness and chains. And lo! here was a new truth. It defeated death, therefore it brought salvation. Anthea’s whole be-

ing was so submerged in these thoughts, that Cinna, for the first time in many days, failed to observe terror on her face before approaching midday.

The procession had at last started from the city to Golgotha, and from the prominence upon which Anthea rested it could be plainly seen. The multitude of people was large, but in contrast with the vast plain it seemed smaller. From the open gates of the city the crowd kept pouring out, and the number was being augmented by those waiting outside the walls. First appeared a long file, which widened out like a river as it proceeded. At the flanks ran swarms of children. The procession was spotted with the white garments and scarlet and blue headdresses of the women. In the midst glistened the bright armor and spears of the Roman cohort, which reflected the flying rays of the sun. The murmur of mixed voices

came from afar and became more and more distinct.

At last they approached nearer, and the first rows commenced ascending the hill. The crowd hurried up to secure good places, so that they might better view the spectacle, thus leaving in the rear the company of soldiers who guarded the condemned. First to arrive were half-naked children, mostly boys, whose loins only were covered with a cloth, with closely cropped heads, save two locks of hair in front, blue-eyed, swarthy, and loud-voiced. With wild uproar they tore out loose pieces of rock from the crevices with which to stone the condemned. Behind them the hill swarmed with the grizzled rabble, most of whose faces expressed a fierce burning expectation. There were seen no traces of pity. Although Anthea was accustomed in Alexandria to the animated speech of the Greeks, yet she was

astounded at the loud, sharp tones of their voices, the volubility of their cries, and their wild, excited gestures and actions. The crowd seemed as if about to engage in a fight, shouting as if their lives were at stake, and wrangling as if in danger of being torn limb from limb.

Centurion Rufilus approached the litter and quietly gave some instructions to the soldiers. Meanwhile, from the city the crowds grew in numbers, like the waves of the sea. The pressure increased every minute. In the multitude could be seen well-to-do citizens of Jerusalem, clothed in striped robes, who kept aloof from the mob of the purlieus; also came numerous husbandmen, accompanied by their families, who came to the city for the holy days. Also there were laborers whose loins were clad in bagging, and herdsmen clad in goatskins, with good-natured wonderment depicted on their faces. In the

crowds could be seen many women, but as the ladies of the upper classes remained at home they were mostly the women of the people, the wives of husbandmen and laborers, or the women of the street, arrayed in flaming colors, with dyed hair and eyebrows, tinted finger nails and carmined cheeks, scented with nard which one could smell from afar, large earrings and necklaces made of coins. At last arrived a sanhedrim of the scribes and elders, and in their midst walked Hanaan, an old man with the face of a vulture and red eyelids, the high priest Caiaphas, with a two-cornered headdress and golden breastplate. Together with them walked different Pharisees: first, the "foot draggers," who purposely stumbled at every obstacle, the "bleeding heads," who struck their heads against the walls, and the "bowed backs," who pretended to be weighed down with the sins of the whole

city. Their ascetic gloom and rigorous countenances distinguished them from the noisy crowd of the common people.

Cinna regarded the multitude with the cold, haughty glance of the dominant class, Anthea with surprise and alarm. Many Jews inhabited Alexandria, but there they were half Hellenes, here for the first time she saw them as described by Pilate and as they indeed were, in their own nest. Her young face, on which death had already put its seal, and her shadowy form, attracted attention. They eyed her as persistently as the soldiers surrounding her litter would admit; so great was their hatred and abhorrence for all foreigners that their faces showed no pity, but rather joy that she could not escape death. Anthea now understood why these men could clamor to crucify the prophet who preached love.

Suddenly it appeared to her as if this

Nazarene were very near and dear to her. He must die and so must she. Naught could save him after the decree of death was issued, and now her decree was irrevocable, so it seemed to Anthea that they were joined together in the bonds of suffering and of death. He went to the cross with a sublime faith in the hereafter, while she, possessing none, had come here to view him, hoping thereby to obtain it. Meanwhile, from afar spread the wild, howling tumult, and then came a deep silence. Then was heard the clanking of armor and the heavy tread of the legionaries. The crowd wavered, opened, and the body of soldiers preceding the condemned began to file past the litter. From the front, sides, and rear marched the soldiers, with regular and even tread, and in the middle could be seen, borne aloft, the timbers for three crosses, which seemed to go alone because they were car-

ried by three men who were bent under their weight. It was easy to see that none of these three was the Nazarene, for two of them had the shameless and unabashed faces of criminals, and the third was a middle-aged countryman whom the soldiers forced as a substitute. The Nazarene walked behind the crosses, having a guard of two soldiers. Around his shoulders and over his robe was placed a purple mantle, and on his head a crown of thorns, from under whose sharp points exuded drops of blood. Some were trickling slowly down his face, and some hardened in globules like the red berries of the wild rose or coral beads. He was pale and walked with slow, weak, wavering footsteps. Amid the jeers of the crowd he moved unconsciously, as if wrapt in the contemplation of another world, unheeding the cries of hate and derision, or as if, forgiving beyond the measure of human

forgiveness, and compassionate beyond the measure of human compassion, because, already he was encompassed by infinity, already exalted above this human sphere, full of peace, sweet, and sad only over the great sin and sorrow of this world.

“Thou art truth,” whispered Anthea, with trembling lips.

The procession was now passing close to the litter. There was a moment when the procession stopped to allow the soldiers to clear the way through the mob; then Anthea saw the Nazarene standing a few footsteps off. She saw how the breeze played with the locks of his hair, saw the purple reflection from his mantle on his pale, translucent face. The crowd now pressed eagerly forward to reach him, forming a narrow semicircle around the soldiers, who were compelled to make a barrier with their spears to defend him from its rage. Everywhere were seen

arms stretched forth and clenched fists, glaring eyes, snarling teeth, bristling beards, and foaming lips that vomited forth hoarse imprecations over his head. He glanced around as if saying, "What have I done to thee?" Then lifting his eyes to heaven he prayed and forgave them.

"Anthea! Anthea!" at this moment called Cinna.

Anthea heard not. Great tears welled up in her eyes and flowed down her cheeks. She forgot her illness, forgot that for days she had not arisen from her litter, arising suddenly, trembling and half-unconscious, from sorrow, compassion and indignation at the blind clamors of the crowd, she began hurriedly plucking hyacinths and apple blossoms from her litter and cast them at the feet of the Nazarene.

For one moment there was silence. The crowd was astounded at the spectacle of

this high-born Roman lady honoring the condemned. He rested his gaze on her pale, suffering face, and his lips moved as if blessing her. Anthea, falling on the pillows of the litter, felt that there was flowing upon her a sea of light, goodness, mercy, comfort, hope, happiness, and she whispered again:

“Thou art truth.”

Again the tears welled up within her and flowed afresh.

The Nazarene was now pushed forward a number of paces, to where already stood the upright timbers of the crosses, securely imbedded in the fissures of the rocks. For a moment the crowd obstructed her view, but as the place where the crosses were erected was on higher ground, she again saw his pale face, surmounted with the crown of thorns. The soldiers again with the butt ends of their spears drove back the crowds, so that they

would not interfere with the execution. They now commenced to fasten the two thieves to their crosses. The third cross stood in the middle, with a white tablet nailed to the top, which shook and rattled in the increasing wind. When the soldiers approached the Nazarene to disrobe him the crowd resounded with mocking exclamations: "King! king! surrender not thyself! King! where are now thy hosts? Defend thyself!" And then burst forth a mighty derisive laugh, which was taken up and echoed by the rocky hills. Meanwhile the soldiers had stretched him on the ground to prepare to nail his hands to the crosspiece, and then together with it to raise him to the upright timber.

At this instant a man who was standing near Anthea's litter, dressed in a white simar, threw himself on the ground, cast dust on his head, and wailed forth with despairing voice:

"I was a leper—he healed me—why crucify him?"

The face of Anthea became as white as linen.

"He healed him! Dost thou hear, Caius?" she said.

"Dost thou wish to return?" asked Cinna.

"No, I shall remain here."

Cinna was now filled with a wild and immeasurable despair, because he had not besought the Nazarene to heal Anthea.

At this moment the soldiers placed the nails against the palms of his hands, and began to strike them. At first was heard the dull clang of the hammers on the iron, which changed into a clearer sound as the nails penetrated the wood. The crowd again became quiet, the better to hear the cries which they expected the

pain would wring from the lips of the Nazarene.

But he remained silent and naught could be heard save the ominous strokes of the hammer.

At last they finished the work, and the crosspiece, together with the body, was raised up. The centurion, who was watching their work, sang out monotonous words of command, upon which a soldier began to nail the feet. Meanwhile the clouds, which from the morning were spreading over the horizon, obscured the sun. The distant rocks and hills were extinguished. The earth darkened as if before night. An ominous copper-colored gloom covered the land, and became deeper and deeper, as the sun sank further behind the somber banks of clouds. It seemed as if some power from above were passing through a sieve red darkness on the earth. Then came a hot gust of wind

—once, twice—then stopped. The air became stifling.

Suddenly the remnants of ruddy gleams darkened; clouds, dismal as night, rolled as a gigantic wall toward the plateau, and the city. The storm was arising. The world was filled with a great unrest.

“Let us return,” repeated Cinna.

“Again and again I must see him,” answered Anthea.

As the darkness bedimmed the hanging bodies, Cinna commanded the litter to be brought nearer the place of suffering. They approached so near that only a few steps separated them from the cross. On the dark tree was seen the white body of the crucified, which in the gathering gloom looked as if woven from silvery moonbeams. His breast rose and fell with quick breaths, his head and eyes he held turned upward.

From out the clouds there issued a low, deep, rumbling murmur. The thunder awoke, arose, rolled with a terrific crash from east to west, and then, as if falling into a bottomless pit, resounded lower and lower, weaker, then louder, and in the end the thunderbolt exploded with a deafening report, which shook the earth to its foundation.

Blue, lurid, gigantic lightning tore through the clouds, illuminating heaven, earth, the crosses, the soldiers' armor; the mob huddled like a flock of sheep, restless and frightened.

After the lightning the darkness deepened.

Near the litter could be heard the weeping of many women, who had striven to approach the cross. There was something indescribably affecting in this sound amid the silence. They, who had been separated by the crowd, began to hail

each other. Here and there arose frightened voices.

“Oyah! Oy lanoo! Is not the just crucified?”

“Who gave witness to the truth? Oyah!”

“Who raised the dead? Oyah!”

Another cries:

“Woe to thee, oh, Jerusalem!”

Another again:

“The earth trembleth!”

The second lightning opened the depths of heaven, and showed in them Titanic, fiery figures. The voices were silenced, or rather perished in the whistling of the wind, which suddenly arose with a mighty force, tearing the headgear and mantles from the multitude, and scattering them broadcast over the plateau.

The multitude again cried forth:

“The earth trembleth!”

Some started to run; others were riveted

to the spot with terror, and they stood stupefied, without thought, with the dull impression only that something terrible had occurred.

The darkness began to redden. The storm rolled in the clouds, turning them over and tearing them into fragments. The light gradually increased, the dark dome of the heavens opened, and through the rift suddenly poured a stream of bright sunlight. It made everything visible—the plateau, the frightened faces, and the crosses.

The head of the Nazarene had fallen on his breast, pale and waxen; his eyelids were closed and his lips were blue.

“He is dead,” whispered Anthea.

“He is dead,” repeated Cinna.

At this moment the centurion raised his spear, and pierced the side of the dead one. It was wonderful. The return of light and the sight of this death

seemed to quiet the crowd. Now the people approached nearer to the cross, the soldiers not hindering them. Now there were heard voices:

“Descend from the cross! descend from the cross!”

Anthea, resting her eyes once more on this pale, reclining head, whispered, as if to herself:

“Will he arise from the dead?”

In the presence of death, which had set its blue mark on his eyes and lips, in the presence of those outstretched arms, in the presence of this motionless body, sagging downward with a dead weight, her voice trembled with despair and doubt.

A no less sorrow was tugging at the soul of Cinna. He also did not believe that the Nazarene would arise from the dead, but he did believe, that if he had lived, he, with his good or evil power, could have healed Anthea.

Meanwhile some of the multitude clamored again:

“Descend from the cross! descend from the cross!”

“Descend!” repeated Cinna, in the despair of his soul, “heal her for me, and take for it my life.”

It became clearer. The hills were yet in mist, but over the plateau and city the sky was bright. “*Turris Antonia*” blazed in the sky, as if it were a sun itself. The air became fresh and swarmed with swallows. Cinna gave command to return.

The hour was after the noon time. Near the house, Anthea said suddenly:

“Hecate did not come to-day.”

Cinna also thought of this.

CHAPTER VII.

THE haunting specter did not appear the next day. The patient was more cheerful than usual, because there arrived from Cæsarea, Timon, who, being anxious for his daughter's life, and alarmed by Cinna's letters, had a few days before left Alexandria, to behold once more his only child, before death claimed her. To Cinna's heart again came hope, knocking as if calling for admittance. He dared not open the door to this guest; he feared to hope. Never before had there been a cessation of these visions which tortured Anthea for two days in succession, though these visions had ceased for one day at Alexandria, and once in the desert. The present improvement Cinna ascribed to the arrival of Timon and the impression

of the cross, which so filled the thoughts of the patient, that even in the presence of her father she could speak of naught else.

Timon heard all this with great attention, contradicted not, pondered deeply, and seriously inquired into the doctrine of the Nazarene, of which Anthea knew only what Pilate had told her.

She felt better and somewhat stronger, and when noon came and went, in her eyes shone true hope. Several times she called this day fortunate, and asked her husband to make a note of it.

The day was indeed somber and gloomy. The rain fell all the morning, copiously at first, then in a lesser degree, until it drizzled out of the low overhanging clouds. In the evening the clouds lifted, and the great fiery globe of the sun looked out of the mist, painted with purple and gold the clouds, the gray rocks,

the white portico of the villa, and sank below the horizon amid these glorious colors into the Mediterranean.

The day following the weather was beautiful. It prophesied heat, but the morning was fresh, the sky was cloudless, and the air so submerged in the blue bath that everything seemed to be blue. Anthea ordered herself carried beneath the favorite pistachio tree, so that from the eminence upon which it stood she might drink in the view of the joyful and azure expanse. Cinna and Timon did not leave the side of the litter for one instant, carefully watching the face of the invalid. It bore an expression of wistful expectancy. There was an absence of that dreadful terror which previously had enveloped her before the coming of midday. Her eyes were clear and bright, and her cheeks were mantled with a delicate rosy flush. At moments Cinna indeed thought that

Anthea might regain her health, and at this thought he felt like throwing himself on the ground and blessing the gods; again, fear possessed him that this might be the last gleam of the flickering lamp. Desiring to gain some assurance from Timon he looked at him, but like thoughts were passing in the mind of Timon, and he avoided Cinna's gaze. Cinna, watching the shadows, marked with beating heart that they became more and more short.

They all sat immersed in thought. The least perturbed of all was Anthea herself. Reclining in the open litter, with her head resting on a purple pillow, she breathed with joy the pure air which the western breeze brought from the sea; but before noon this breeze fell. The heat became greater; warmed by the sun, the wild flower of the rocks and the bushes of nard exhaled a fragrance, strong and intoxica-

ting. Over the clusters of anemones hovered bright butterflies. From out the fissures of the rocks stole small lizards, which had already become accustomed to the litter and people, venturing, as usual, one after another, yet timid and cautious of every movement. The whole world was resting in the soothing balm of the radiant silence, warmth, pure sweetness, blue dreaminess.

Timon and Cinna seemed equally sunk in this profound azure peace. Anthea closed her eyes as if drifting into slumber; the silence was unbroken save by the faint sighs which animated her bosom.

Cinna now observed that his shadow had shortened and lay around his feet.

It was noon.

Anthea slowly opened her eyes, broke the silence in a strange tone, saying:

“Cinna, give me thy hand.”

Cinna started to her side, the blood con-

gealed in his veins as if his heart was ice: the hour for the terrible vision had come.

Her eyes opened wider.

“Seest thou,” she said, “over there, a light, gathering and forming in the air? See how it shines, trembles, and approaches me!”

“Anthea! look not there!” exclaimed Cinna.

Wonderful! No terror appeared on her face, her lips slightly parted, her eyes widened and a measureless joy illuminated her face.

“The pillar of light approaches me,” she further said.

“I see; it is he, it is the Nazarene!—he smiles!—Oh, sweet!—Oh, merciful!—His pierced hands he stretches forth to me as a mother. Cinna! he brings me health, salvation, and calls me unto Him.”

Cinna, becoming very pale, said:



"Seest thou," she said, "over there, a light gathering and forming in the air?"—Page 82.



“Whithersoever He calleth us—*Let us follow Him.*”

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A moment later, from the other side, on the stony pathway leading from the city, appeared Pontius Pilate. Before he approached it could be seen from his face that he brought great tidings, which as a sensible man he regards as a new, fantastical invention of the credulous and ignorant multitude. From afar off he called out aloud, as he wiped the sweat from his brow:

“Imagine what they now say: that He has risen from the dead!”



BE BLESSED.



BE BLESSED.

ONCE, on a bright moonlight night, wise and great Krishna, meditating deeply, said: "I thought that man was the most beautiful creature on earth. I was mistaken. Here I see a lotus flower swayed by the night breeze. Oh, how much more beautiful it is than any living being! Its petals are now opened to the silvery light of the moon, and I cannot take my eyes from it.

"Yes, there is nothing like it among men," repeated he, with a sigh; but after awhile he thought: "Why could not I, being a god, by the power of a word create a being that would be the same among men as is the lotus among flowers? For a joy to men on earth, therefore, let it be

Be Blessed.

so. Lotus, transform thyself into a living maiden, and stand before me."

Then the water vibrated tenderly, as if touched by the wing of a swallow, the night became clearer, the moon beamed brighter, stronger trilled the note of the nightingale, followed by a deep silence, and the miracle was done.

There before Krishna stood the lotus in human form divine.

The god himself was astonished.

"Thou wert a flower of the lake," he said; "be now a flower of my thought and speak."

And the maiden began to whisper as softly as the rustling of the white petals of the lotus kissed by the summer breeze.

"Lord, thou hast changed me into a being endowed with life; where wilt thou command me to abide? Remember, Lord, that when I was a flower I trembled and folded my leaves before every breath of

Be Blessed.

wind. I feared, Lord, the rains and tempest; I feared the thunder and lightning; I feared even the scorching rays of the sun. Thou hast told me to be an embodiment of the lotus, therefore I have preserved my former nature; and now I fear, Lord, the earth and all there is thereon. Where wilt thou command me to abide?"

Krishna lifted his wise eyes to the stars, mused awhile, then said:

"Do you wish to dwell on the mountain-tops?"

"Snow and cold are there; I fear them."

"Then I will build thee a crystal palace in the clear depths of the lake."

"In abysses of water there move serpents and other monsters; I fear them, Lord."

"Do you wish the endless plains?"

"Oh, Lord! Storms and tempests trample the plains like wild herds."

Be Blessed.

“What, then, will I do with thee, embodied flower? Ah! In the caves of Ellora live holy anchorites. Dost thou wish to dwell there far away from the world in a cave with them?”

“It is dark there, Lord, I fear.”

Krishna seated himself on a stone and leaned his head upon his hand; the maiden stood before him, trembling and afraid.

Slowly the dawn commenced to spread its light in the eastern heavens, the golden glow covered the lake, palms, and bamboo groves. The choir of birds burst forth with their morning song, the rosy stork, the blue crane, the white swan on the waters, the peacocks and bengali in the woods, and, as if in accompaniment, there came the sound of strings fastened to pearly shells and the words of human song.

Be Blessed.

Krishna awoke from his deep thought and said:

“It is the poet Valmiki, greeting the sunrise.”

Then parted the curtain of purple flowers covering the vines, and on the edge of the lake appeared Valmiki.

Seeing the embodied lotus, he ceased playing, the pearly shells slipped slowly from his hands, his arms drooped by his side, and he stood speechless, as if great Krishna had transformed him into a tree; and the god was glad to see admiration for his work, and said:

“Awake, Valmiki, and speak.”

And Valmiki spoke: “I love—” This was the only word he remembered and the only word he could utter.

The face of Krishna suddenly brightened. “Wondrous maiden, I have found in the world the place worthy of thee; dwell in the heart of the poet.”

Be Blessed.

Valmiki repeated the second time, "I love."

The will of the mighty Krishna, the will of divinity impelled the maiden to the heart of the poet. The god made, also, the heart of Valmiki as clear as crystal. Radiant as a summer day, quiet as a wave of the Ganges, the maiden was entering into her appointed dwelling-place; but suddenly, as she was looking into the heart of Valmiki, her face paled, and as a chilling wind a great fear enveloped her, and Krishna wondered.

"Embodied flower," questioned he, "dost thou fear even the heart of the poet?"

"Lord," answered the maiden, "where dost thou command me to dwell? Behold in this one heart I see the snowy mountain-tops, the watery depths full of wondrous creatures, the plains with the storms

Be Blessed.

and tempests, and the dark Ellora cave;
so I fear again, oh, Lord."

But good and wise Krishna said:

"Peace be unto thee, embodied flower;
if in Valmiki's heart lie the desolate
snows, be thou a warm breath of the
spring which will them melt; if there be
watery depths, be thou a pearl in those
depths; if there be the desert plains, plant
thou in them the flowers of happiness; if
there be the dark Ellora cave, be thou in
that darkness a sunny ray."

And Valmiki, who had now regained
his speech, added: "*And be blessed.*"

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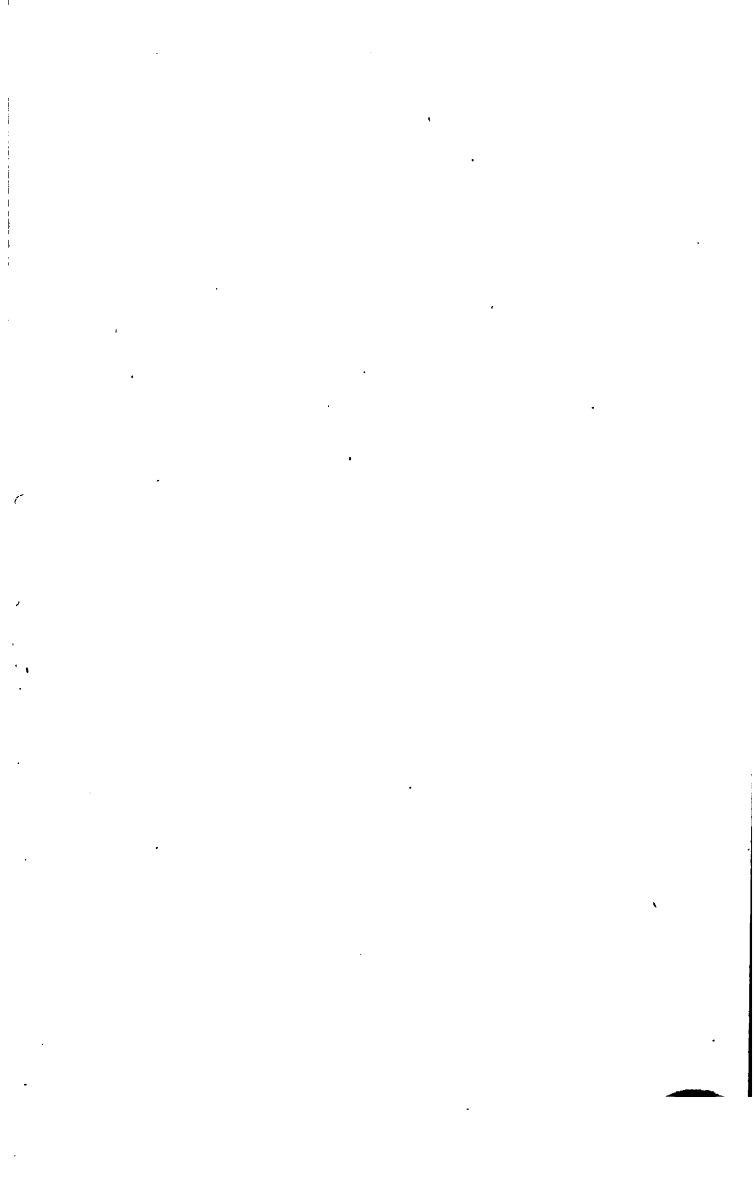
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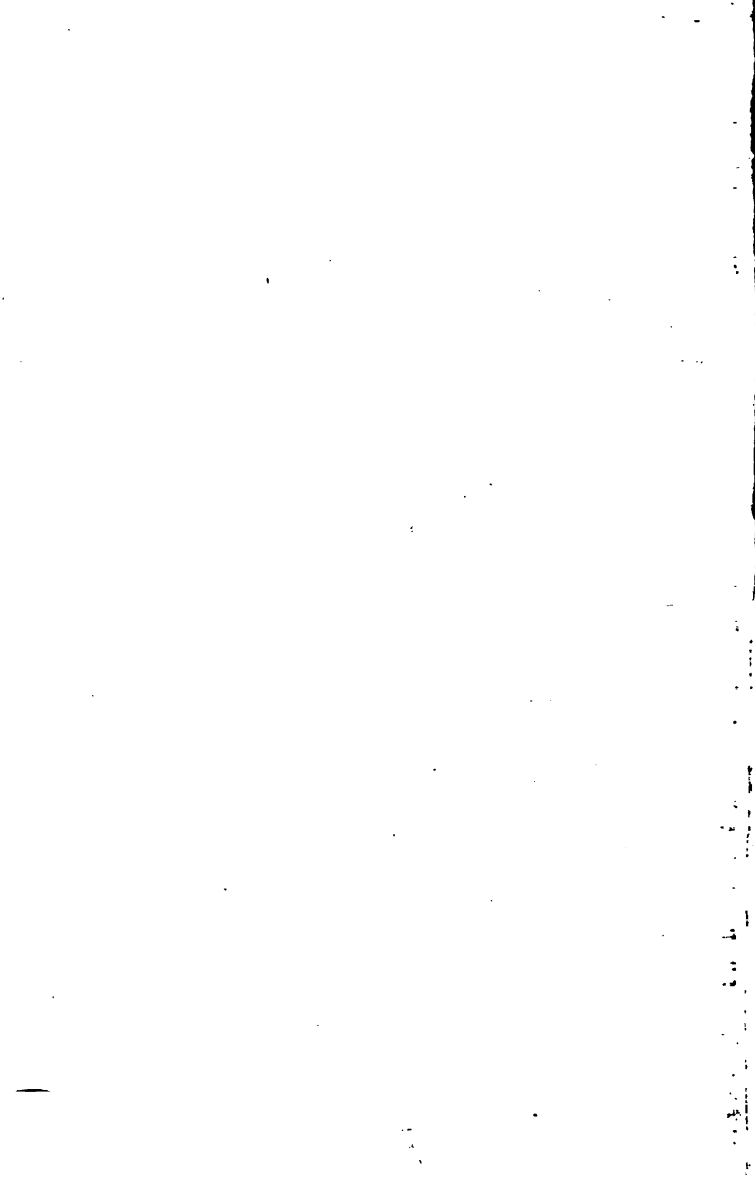
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